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RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA 7021  
RUEHBU/AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES 2625  
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 9836  
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RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC  
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DRL/IRF FOR DEBORAH SCHNEIDER  
INR FOR JAMES SANDERS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PGOV PINR PHUM VE PE

SUBJECT: EVANGELICAL CHRISTIANS CARVE OUT POLITICAL SPACE

REF: A. LIMA 1765  
1B. LIMA 1220  
1C. LIMA 4197 (05)  
1D. LIMA 3415 (05)  
1E. LIMA 3414 (05)

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Summary:  
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11. (SBU) Peru's Evangelical Protestants constitute a rising, pro-US, anti-radical force that helped Alan Garcia defeat Ollanta Humala in Peru's 6/4 presidential race (Ref A-D). Garcia showed his gratitude when he attended a post-inaugural Evangelical "Thanksgiving" service held in his honor. There are half a dozen Evangelicals in Congress from various parties; they hold two of Congress' top four offices (President and Third Vice President); and former presidential candidate and Evangelical Pastor Humberto Lay is now running second in the race for Lima Mayor. Though Lay won't likely defeat popular incumbent Luis Casteneda, his candidacy shows that the Evangelicals have tasted politics and will remain a factor. End Summary.

12. (U) After Evangelical Pastor Humberto Lay's surprising sixth place finish in Peru's first-round presidential race in April, taking just over four percent of the vote nationwide, APRA candidate Alan Garcia took notice. He courted Lay and his followers during the second round, meeting quietly with 50 Evangelical Pastors in mid-April and promising them, among other things, a prominent place in ceremonies surrounding his inauguration. Lay's support proved critical for Garcia's second-round face off with Ollanta Humala in June, since the former drew votes from the same impoverished rural and urban groups that supported Ollanta Humala.

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Post-Inaugural "Thanksgiving" with the Evangelicals  
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13. (U) President Garcia showed his appreciation for the Evangelicals' backing in late July when he attended a post-inaugural "Thanksgiving" service held by Evangelical Pastors at the Christian Missionary Alliance Church in Pueblo Libre. This was the first time Protestant organizations had

participated in the ceremonies surrounding a presidential inauguration. Garcia brought several of his cabinet Ministers and a number of top APRA legislators, including Mercedes Cabanillas, President of the Congress (herself an Evangelical). About 2,000 Peruvian Evangelicals attended as well as the leader of the opposition, pro-Fujimori Party Alliance for the Future, Keiko Fujimori.

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Evangelicals in Congress  
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¶4. (SBU) While there are two Evangelical Congress representatives from Humberto Lay's National Restoration party (RN), Mirta Lazo and Juan Perry Cruz, other parties also count Evangelicals in their ranks, including: Congress President Mercedes Cabanillas, Congress Third Vice President and member of the pro-Fujimori Party Alliance for the Future Luisa Cuculiza, and Unidad Nacional Congress rep from Trujillo Wilson Urtecho, and indigenous representative from Ollanta Humala's Peruvian Nationalist Party Maria Sumire.

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Lay is Running, Again!  
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¶5. (U) In August, former RN presidential candidate Humberto Lay announced that he would run for Mayor of Lima. An APOYO poll taken in mid-June showed him with the second-highest approval rating (38 percent) of any candidate, following incumbent Lima Mayor Luis Castaneda (who scored 82 percent). A subsequent late July Indice poll comparing Castaneda, Lay and several other candidates had Castaneda scoring 49.7 percent and Lay 21.4 percent, establishing Lay as the only candidate with any meaningful popular support in Lima beside Castaneda.

¶6. (SBU) Lay's popularity has subsequently dipped due to divisions within his National Restoration Party. Even so, he holds onto second place in the polls with 9-10 percent of the vote, far ahead of the APRA and other candidates, and in recent days his campaign has raised its profile in Lima by posting numerous billboards throughout the city. In addition to Lima, Lay's campaign people claim that RN is fielding as many as four thousand candidates nationwide in regional and municipal races. RN is reportedly doing well in Loreto, where Evangelical Pastor John Quino is a strong candidate.

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Comment:  
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¶7. (SBU) Peruvian Evangelicals constitute an increasingly politically aware and disciplined voting group with roots among the urban and rural poor. Their efforts in the upcoming regional and municipal elections could represent a solid, if still small, core among the likely sea of electoral fragmentation.

¶8. (SBU) Peruvian Evangelicals line up with the U.S. on a variety of issues, among them terrorism, narcotrafficking and anti-corruption (Refs A-D). They also broadly share many of our fundamental values, including the importance of free markets and democracy. Most important, they continue to increase in number. (Peru was estimated 1-2 percent Protestant in 1990. It is 12-15 percent Protestant today, the vast majority Evangelicals.) The Evangelicals' influence will likely increase, both through RN and through converts among members of existing political parties. President Garcia's astute recognition of this group is probably the most convincing evidence of their political potential.

POWERS